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July 13, 2001

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UM MEETING EXAMINES HEALTH EFFECTS OF FOREST FIRES

MISSOULA —

With the summer fire season heating up, The University of Montana will host a meeting about the health impacts of forest-fire smoke. The Western Montana Follow-up Fire, Smoke and Health Workshop will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday, July 17, in Skaggs Building Room 117.

The meeting will offer new materials on fire, smoke and health issues to U.S. Forest Service employees, public health officers and emergency-response personnel. The event is open to the public but costs \$20. Subjects to be covered include "What Happened During the Fires of 2000?" "What We Learned From the Fires of 2000?" and "What if it's Your Community Next?"

Garon Smith, a UM faculty member and organizer of the event, said the meeting was requested by former U.S. Rep. Rick Hill in the wake of last year's fire season.

Those who can't attend the all-day session on Tuesday can come to a free two-hour version for the general public from 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, July 18, at the Missoula Public Library meeting room. Public comments will be welcomed.

Following is a schedule for the Tuesday meeting:

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8:30 a.m. – Registration.

9 a.m. – Opening remarks.

9:15 a.m. – “The Fires of 2000: The Forest Service Perspective” by Anne Acheson, Forest Service air quality coordinator, and “Smoke, Visibility and Air Quality Index” by John Coefield, Department of Environmental Quality meteorologist.

10:30 a.m. – “The Fires of 2000: The Local Public Health Perspective,” a panel discussion led by Shannon Therriault, Missoula City-County Health Department air quality specialist.

1 p.m. – “Real-time Measurements of Smoke Particulates From a Van-based Instrument” by Ron Babbitt of the Forest Service Fire Science Lab’s Fire Chemistry Unit. Also, “Chemical Profiles of Wildland Fire Smoke” by Garon Smith and Tony Ward of the UM chemistry department and “Health Impacts From the 2000 Fire Season,” a panel discussion with Mike Spence, state medical officer; Joellen Lewtas, researcher with the Environmental Protection Agency National Exposure Research Laboratory; and Jean Pfau with the UM Center for Environmental Health Sciences.

3:15 p.m. – “The Montana Wildfires: Psychological Data on the Effects of Prolonged Disaster” by Ellen Crouse of the UM psychology department.

3:45 p.m. – “What if it’s Your Community Next?” a panel discussion led by Lewtas.

4:15 p.m. – “What We Didn’t Learn and Still Need to Know,” a panel discussion with Andrij Holian, UM Center for Environmental Health director; Garon Smith; and David Kalman, chair of the Department of Environmental Health at the University of Washington.

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